Serpentia: Queen of the Abyss

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Serpentia: Queen of the Abyss

by JS2274

Summary

An anonymous scribe is sent to the cave of the beautiful yet monstrous serpent queen, Serpentia, to record her story in writing. Serpentia's servant, Nullity, recounts how the evil queen petrified villagers and demanded sacrifice in return for her mercy. She also tells the scribe of the nameless youth Foundling, who betrays the village when they seek a hero to kill the monstrous woman. In return, Serpentia rewards him with power, but this is only temporary. Foundling is eventually turned into a woman, Nullity herself, who follows her queen into the netherworld. Even if Nullity is only a simple servant, she proves instrumental to her queen in the depths of the netherworld, after Serpentia has been deceived and forced to give birth to a serpent woman brood.

Serpentia: Queen of the Abyss

A Tale by JS

A dark tale inspired by the She Demon from ‘The Wrong Path’ (Hercules: The Legendary Journeys).

Content Warning: Graphic Violence, Body Horror, Gender Transformation, Emotional Abuse/Humiliation, Forced Worship/Mind Control Themes, Petrification/Human Transformation.

Into the Serpent’s Mouth

I am a scribe, destined to record other people’s deeds. I do not make a name for myself; I merely listen and write. I am no one. Yet, without me, heroes and villains would be forgotten; they would be lost to the mists of time. The elders of Echaia, a small village located a few fields away from the valley that houses the cave known as the Serpent’s Mouth, ordered me to the horrid location. The villagers avoid the place like the plague. They only venture there when they are due to offer tribute to Serpentia, a creature in the likeness of a beautiful woman from the navel up, but who is shaped like a horrid snake from the navel down. Although she has not been seen for many years, the villagers told me of her evil deeds. I could even see them for myself; pillars of stone shaped like men. Not statues, but real men who were turned to stone. The villagers hate Serpentia. They only worship her because they live in fear of her return. And I, a stranger, was ordered to her horrid cave to hear and write her story. A woman, known as the Nullity, was waiting for me there. She was sent by Serpentia herself, or so I was told.

I ventured near the cave. Its opening was eerily evocative of a serpent’s open mouth, while inside I could hear water droplets from several stalactites, falling into the stalagmites below. The air felt humid, while I could barely make out the path in front of me. Then, I saw a plain woman. Everything about her was ordinary, her face, her manner, and even her voice. Were she not alone in the cave, I would neither have seen nor heard her. She wore a straight black dress and a necklace that bore a burnished gold pendant. Her name, if such it was, was inscribed upon it: Nullity.

In the background I heard something, the sound of a huge snake slithering in the distance, then I heard an evil laugh. My heart froze. Serpentia! This, I feared, would be my last day. Nullity spoke, ‘Do not fear, scribe, my queen is returning to the netherworld. She is here only to make sure that the villagers obeyed her. She wants her story told and written down. To be remembered, and worshipped, for who she really is. That is why you are here. Let us not waste time. Here I feel alone; I long to serve and worship my queen.’

I got my manuscript, and my writing implements, out of their leather case. I wrote down the story told to me by Nullity…

The Village and the Queen

I remember a time when Echaia worshipped the old gods; those beings who, it was believed, dwelt in the skies. That was before my great queen claimed this cave, when a mysterious laugh, an evil laugh, as the villagers described it, echoed across the valley and beyond. The village elders would send young warriors to look for the woman who laughed. None of those who came back saw her, but they saw stone statues that looked exactly like men they knew. Over the next few months the number of statues increased, even when the elders refrained from sending men to look for the mysterious woman.

A council was then convened. The elders decided to send one man to the mouth of the cave—to call upon the mysterious woman, reason with her, and discover what she wanted from the villagers. Everyone was certain that it was this woman who turned the villagers into stone. The choice fell on a man who bore no name. Everyone knew him as Foundling, for no one knew who his parents were, or who abandoned him at the outskirts of the village. He had no real family of his own. So, it was decided that he would be the one to risk his life.

The boy was afraid, yet he agreed to the elders' choice. He walked towards the cave in the light of day, and soon, he reached its mouth. Foundling had been there before and, he was certain, the cave did not look like a serpent's mouth, nor did he recall that it ever was so hot and humid. As he gazed into the emptiness he shouted, 'Lady, I am Foundling, a boy from the village. I came to ask what it is you want from us.' The response was an evil laugh, and the sound of a huge serpent slithering across the cave. Its coils made a squelching sound over the moist ground and then, right before him, he saw the most beautiful of women. Yet, she was a serpent from the navel down. Her green scales glistened, while the rattle at the end of her tail sang like dry leaves in the wind. Her human body swayed from side to side, while she opened her mouth and moved her tongue as if she desired to be loved. Yet, her fangs spoke of death, even as her hazel eyes and auburn hair were seduction itself. Her breasts heaved beneath her bejewelled gold corselet. Foundling was terrified and drawn to her at the same time.

Serpentia spoke to him. 'Why shouldn't I turn you into stone like I did all the other men? You fear and desire me, and you will not escape.' As she said this, she moved her arms up and down her body. Foundling followed them with his eyes, now altogether drawn to her. He knelt and confessed, 'I worship you, my queen. I was sent by the villagers to plead for your mercy.' As he said this, the serpent woman burst out laughing. She replied, 'You are a worm, and so are all the villagers. Your lives are nothing to me. If you want me to spare your young men, you will destroy the statues of your gods, and you will rededicate the temples to me, Serpentia! Once every year, you will offer me five women to serve and die for me. Once every month you will sacrifice a choice bull in front of my cave. Your young men and women will visit my cave every evening and sing my praises. They will chant about my mercy, my beauty, and my greatness. If the villagers meet these demands, I will spare them. If they do not, I will turn all your young men into stone, including you. Now go and convey my queenly

word. I expect to have the first bull sacrificed, and the first songs sung, tomorrow. Today, this very day, the villagers will destroy the statues of their gods! Now go, worm!'

Foundling went back to the village and conveyed Serpentia's words. The priests protested wildly. Yet, fear of the serpent queen overcame devotion. Mothers and fathers stormed the temples against the urgings of their elders and priests. Serpentia laughed and swung her tail from side to side as she heard the statues of the gods crashing down. She was outside the cave dancing and rejoicing when Foundling came back to tell her that the village was hers. She answered, 'Very good, my worm, very good! Tomorrow, you will lead the songs sung in my praise. Oh, how great, powerful, and beautiful I am!' Her laughter echoed throughout the valley and beyond, but the priests were already plotting her downfall.

The Eunuch

Foundling never disclosed to anyone his attraction to Serpentia. He recognised that she was beautiful, but he always told the elders, and the priests, that he was deeply aware of her evil nature. Both elders and priests were convinced that Foundling had strength of character, because he could look into the face of evil and preserve his sanity. The priests approached him alone and told him to depart the village in search of Etatus, the strong eunuch who had killed the Manticore in the city of Edara. 'He is our only hope,' said the high priest, 'for he has incredible strength, while he is immune to Serpentia's seduction. If he gets past her coils, he will crush her womanly body. He destroyed the mighty Manticore; the serpent woman stands no chance.'

Foundling replied that he would set out in search of the eunuch the next day. He left the village and headed south, only to veer east, and eventually north towards the cave. He walked into the cave as the sun set and called out to Serpentia. Soon, the serpent woman slithered in front of him. 'What does the worm want with his queen?' she asked. With tears in his eyes Foundling told her of the elders' plan. The queen was furious. She issued forth a horrid scream and slithered around the cave as if she were out of her wits. Serpentia was certain that if he got to her, Etatus would kill her. He carried the might of the gods, and he was pure. Her wiles would be of no use. She cried, 'No, it cannot be. How could they? No! I will turn them all to stone, now!'

Foundling knelt to her, and said, 'Listen to me, my queen. I will let no one harm you. Let me go in search of the eunuch. I will stab him when his back is turned.' Serpentia suddenly stopped and turned towards him. She opened her eyes wide, pouted, and looked straight into Foundling's eyes. She pleaded, 'Will you be my knight? Will you slay the bloodless brute who threatens your beautiful queen?' Foundling reaffirmed that he would. Serpentia removed a bracelet from her arm and gave it to her man. Her voice, somewhere between a moan and a hiss, told him of the bracelet's power. It would hide Foundling's true intentions even from the eunuch. He would appear pure and innocent.

'Leave,' she told him. 'Come back to your queen as her protector, her knight.' Foundling nodded and replied, 'I will kill him for you, my queen. We will say that you killed the brute. That way the village will fear you even more. I only want the reward of a place beside you. As your knight, your worm even.' Serpentia kissed Foundling and sent him off.

Foundling travelled south until he reached a small camp. The eunuch only travelled with two other men, who would hunt and help him in his quests. Foundling observed them stealthily before he made himself known. He saw that the detested strongman was often alone. There would be a chance to kill him from behind or in his sleep.

The traitor approached the camp and knelt before the massive eunuch. He told the strongman of the plight of his village. The eunuch took pity on the innocent boy and promised to walk with him to the village to kill the evil creature. ‘Her wiles will have no effect on me. I have no desire, and I will break her in two. Her head will adorn my belt.’ Etatus pointed to the horns and bones hanging from his belt, remains of the monsters he defeated. Foundling’s heart went still as he heard those words and saw the bones, but he kept calm and smiled.

The eunuch then went into his tent and Foundling followed right after him. The two men who accompanied Etatus had left the camp to hunt. ‘Maybe,’ Foundling thought, ‘this will not be too difficult.’ It was not. The eunuch was strong and free from carnal desires, but in his own manner proud and naive. He turned his back to Foundling and left his sword planted in the ground between them. This was the traitor’s chance. As Etatus spoke to him, the young man moved closer… The sword was not yet within reach.

The eunuch rambled on about Foundling’s purity—how he looked into the face of evil and retained his innocence. Foundling replied that he was only doing his duty and, just then, he made another step forward, grabbed the hilt and slashed the blade across the eunuch’s bare back. The strongman shouted as the blade sliced through skin and flesh. And then, Foundling stabbed the eunuch’s back until the sword point emerged from the middle of his chest. Before he died, Etatus uttered the words, ‘May she unman you.’ The young man smiled wryly, drew the sword, and rushed out of the camp before the eunuch’s men came back.

When Foundling was safely away, hidden in the woods, his bracelet lit and throbbed. Serpentia knew. His queen must be rejoicing. She was... That night the serpent woman screamed for joy. She spun circles with her coils and spread her arms. ‘The prophecy is unfulfilled. The eunuch will not kill me! No, I live on as Serpentia the great and beautiful!’ Her laughter echoed across the valley and beyond as she slithered out of her cave. The following morning the village cried. Another young man was turned to stone, while hundreds of sheep and cows were drowned in their own gore. No one knew for certain what prompted the queen’s spiteful attack; maybe she knew about the eunuch, or perhaps Foundling had betrayed them.

The villagers expected him. They would make him pay. Yet, when they saw him, their suspicions fizzled into nothing. They were deceived by the bracelet just as the eunuch had been. Foundling heard Serpentia’s voice in his head. ‘The knight fought for his queen. Now the worm will lie for her, as her bracelet saved his life. Tell them that the eunuch is on his way. Tell them that the wicked queen knows of the eunuch, for one of his men betrayed him, and the village. Tell them that is why she struck against them. Because she is afraid.’ The villagers believed all of Foundling’s lies. That very evening he took the youths to the cave to sing for Serpentia. The villagers feared that if they did not send them to chant, the wicked queen would strike again before the eunuch confronted her.

Turned to Stone

The ten youths walked towards the cave with two of the elders and Foundling. As the elders looked back at the young man, they saw something different about him. He could tell from the way they gazed at him. They still trusted him, but they looked puzzled. Foundling smirked as they looked away from him. Soon, they would pay the price of their betrayal of his queen.

Foundling led the chant praising Serpentia, ‘Oh great queen, greatest in might… sinuous beauty we adore… whose statues freeze her enemies in terror… we ever love you, and from loyalty we never stir.’ As she heard these words, the serpent queen emerged from her cave. She spread her arms and exulted in the chant, or so it seemed. Then she took in her hands the massive sword she kept hidden in her coils, the sword of the eunuch, the instrument of his own death. Foundling had left the blade in the woods, concealed where only his queen would find it. The huge sword in the serpent woman’s hands sent shivers down the two elders’ spines.

‘Behold,’ she yelled. ‘This is the sword with which I have slain Etatus, your hero. He lies in a pool of his own blood. And now, behold my revenge for your betrayal.’ As soon as these words were spoken, Serpentia screamed, and she was upon the young men and women in no time. She turned them to stone with the mere flick of the rattle that crowned her tail. Their fear excited her, and she sprang on the next youth even more vigorously. She then entwined her coils around the last victim. She swung him softly as he pleaded for mercy. Serpentia smiled, then screamed and petrified the terrified young man.

The queen and Foundling blocked the path of the two fearful elders. Serpentia spoke, ‘You will double your sacrifices and tributes to me, or else I will petrify the second son of each ruling family. And if you persist in disobedience, I will turn on the first! Foundling shall be my messenger and the king of your village. Any rebellion against him shall be a rebellion against me. You shall obey him because he conveys my word. Now leave, worms.’

As the elders left, Serpentia went back to her cave with Foundling, where he grovelled before her and kissed her glistening scales. She even allowed him to kiss her lips. She kissed him back and called him knight, hero… and worm. ‘Never forget your place,’ she cried. ‘You may have killed the eunuch, but you did so only as his back was turned, like the traitorous worm that you are. Yet, you served me well, so you will live, and I shall honour you with my company. What more could you want?’

Foundling knelt before her and replied, ‘Nothing, my queen. I would give up the world for you.’ Serpentia smiled and said, ‘You will, you pathetic worm.’ She looked disdainfully as he walked away, as he rejoiced in her favour. ‘He thinks he is my hero, yet he is hardly a man. And I will unman him completely.’ Serpentia then withdrew into the depths of her cave, where she worshipped the great serpent man, the master of the netherworld to which she would return. She moaned and crawled before his statue and kissed the coils nearest to the ground. She burned with desire for him. She longed to submit to his strong arms and coils. Soon, she would be kissing his real scales.

The Suffering Village

Over the next few years, the village became a temple dedicated to Serpentia. A statue of the serpent woman adorned the village square, while serpent heads guarded each temple entrance. Villagers presented daily offerings to the serpent queen as large white serpents slithered out of her cave. They were Serpentia's eyes within the village, beside Foundling's.

The man walked majestically, bearing his serpent staff and golden crown. Everyone hated him, yet none would oppose him. They all feared him. Serpentia's threat to kill their sons earned Foundling the support of the ruling families, who guarded him from the peasants. He thought that Serpentia's favour would make him the everlasting king, and he behaved with corresponding pride and arrogance. He could not be more mistaken.

As Serpentia grovelled and moaned before his statue, the serpent king ordered her back to the netherworld. She hugged and licked the statue, while her tail swung from side to side. Her breasts heaved and her eyes rolled in anticipation. 'Yes, my king. Your Serpentia is coming. She is yours. A beautiful queen beside your greatness.'

The serpent king then said, 'You will leave that pathetic thing that saved you from the prophecy behind. Or else, you will unman him. A man who kills his enemy behind his back has no worth.' Serpentia bowed her head and responded, 'Yes, great king. No other man will enjoy your Serpentia.' The king, deep in the netherworld, smiled. He wanted Serpentia back, not only because he desired her, but because he needed more of her kind. More serpent women to torment the world above. She would provide them, but to do so she would have to suffer. The king then said, 'Come back to the embrace of the greatest man.' As she heard these words, Serpentia moaned, rolled her eyes, and licked the stone coils once more.

The End of Foundling's Reign

Foundling entered the cave, wearing his golden crown and with his staff in hand. He walked majestically past five women dedicated to Serpentia, who yet lived. The women were simply but beautifully attired to please the serpent queen, yet misery could be read in their eyes. So could their hatred of the traitor. Foundling bowed as he heard Serpentia's scales squelching on the humid ground. A pure white skirt covered the serpent woman's lower body, even if her long tail and rattle trailed behind.

Foundling bowed and said, 'Oh great queen, I am here to serve you.' Serpentia looked down condescendingly at the so-called king. She replied, 'As from this day you will rule the village alone, as my serpent king calls me back to the netherworld to sit on and be pleasured in his coils.' Her tongue ran over her upper lip as she said this, while her breasts heaved. Foundling grovelled and kissed her scales closest to the ground. Tears rolled down his eyes. 'I beg you to take me with you, great queen. The villagers will kill me, and I cannot live without you. I implore you, as your worm.' Foundling now burst out crying like a child. Serpentia looked down at him in utter disgust. 'So, the worm who kills while his enemy's back is turned, is now afraid. Pathetic. You are less than a worm, and I will now be in the arms of a great and powerful king. What need have I of an insipid creature like you? Besides, my king does not want me to take any man, only women to serve me.'

Foundling begged, cried, and snivelled. Serpentia spoke again. ‘Listen, worm. You grovelled enough. I will let you join me if you agree to lose your manhood. Through me, my lord will turn you into a woman. A plain woman whom no man will notice or desire. A woman made to serve me, and to praise my incomparable greatness and beauty.’ Serpentia smiled wryly as Foundling looked at her pleasingly. Tears streamed from his eyes. ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘So long as I serve you, I will be happy.’

The serpent queen laughed at a man who was already no longer such. She raised her hand and voiced a spell. Foundling collapsed and retched, as the man that he was, died. His body was now that of a woman. As Foundling stared at his new body, Serpentia ordered one of her women to fetch a mirror. Foundling saw the face of a woman, plain and ordinary. She was the same woman who stood before me… Nullity. As soon as she was born, Nullity witnessed the cruelty of her evil mistress. Serpentia threw off her white skirt and stung with her rattle. Four of the women dedicated to her were dead in no time. The queen’s coils were now wrapped around the fifth one, who screamed in terror. The queen savoured the woman’s fear as her coils pulled up her black dress, which fell to the ground. Serpentia also removed the woman’s necklace with her hands before she turned her to stone. The queen danced as she gazed on the five statues frozen in terror: women who combed her hair, bathed her, dressed her, and adored her.

Serpentia now spoke to her surviving servant. ‘Your name is Nullity. You shall spend eternity serving and praising me. You will speak only when spoken to, and you shall gaze impotently as the serpent king pleasures me. Now put on that dress and the necklace. Look well on the pendant with your new name. It reminds you what you are. Before we leave for the netherworld, you will go back to the village, and you will convey my message. You will tell them that the queen will return and if, upon her return, they have desisted from her worship, she will turn all the village into stone. Now go and return before sunset. You will take your staff as a sign of my favour, but this is the last time you carry it. Take my command to the village and let them see how I unmade your manhood.’

Return to the Netherworld

Serpentia slithered down the cave, past the statue of the serpent king. She gazed at the stone face, the stern eyes, and the bearded chin before she moved on. She moaned. She longed for him. Nullity followed her deep into the narrowing cave. Then, suddenly, the narrow corridor opened into a sprawling underground valley. In places the darkness gave way to bright fires. The screams, however, were continuous, and they came from all directions. ‘This,’ Serpentia explained ‘is the valley of the damned. This is where those who displease my king, or who fall under our power, are condemned to torment. Listen to their screams and powerless rage. The noise fills my heart with such pleasure!’ The serpent queen then ventured down a path to the left of the corridor, until they reached the edge of the valley.

Serpentia led Nullity into the forest of statues. Thousands of petrified men and women sat on a field of sharp black crystals and large white snakes crawled all over them. Their human voices screamed, cried, and cursed at Serpentia. ‘This is where the men and women I turned to stone suffer for all eternity. They are punished because they fell under my power, and their

fate is in my hands. Listen to their impotent rage! The thought that they are forever under my power is exhilarating!' Serpentia raised her arms and laughed at the stone statues. 'Here I am the queen, and all, save for my great king, must submit to me!' Then, the serpent queen slithered out of the forest, and as she did, horned, red-skinned creatures armed with spears and blades bowed to her. One of them stood in front of Serpentia and said, 'Your king eagerly awaits, great queen. He longs for your embrace.'

Serpentia went into the black palace and the majestic throne room. Nullity followed as if she were her shadow. Soon, the servant saw the serpent king for the first time. Like her mistress, he was human from the navel up, and a serpent from the navel down. But his serpent half was bigger, thicker, and clearly stronger, much stronger, than Serpentia's. His manly gaze was stern, yet he smiled greedily as the queen slithered towards him. She rested her coils on his and kissed and fondled his beard. 'I am back,' she said. The two beings kissed and hugged, and the king's coils wrapped around Serpentia's. Nullity watched as a man, another man, took possession of the beloved queen. She snivelled as Serpentia gave herself willingly into his arms, and into his massive coils.

The king then noticed Nullity. 'This is your fate, you nothing. It counts for naught that you saved my bride from the eunuch. I will enjoy her, while you will spend eternity combing her hair, dressing her up, and polishing her glistening scales.' Nullity cried. Serpentia laughed and said, 'She is pathetic, my king. A traitor to her race. The most despicable of creatures. Yet, she can be useful.' As Serpentia humiliated her, Nullity felt love surging even more powerfully within her. Serpentia's disdain was better than indifference. It meant that her queen saw her.

Serpentia Bound

The serpent queen did not enjoy her king's embraces for long. He summoned her to his throne. 'I demand that you raise a brood for me. I need more of your kind to torment my enemies, to oppress whoever falls under my power. You will lay eggs, Serpentia. You will guard them. And you will do so now!'

The serpent queen slithered back. The horrid creatures to either side of the throne room laughed as the proud queen was shown her place. Serpentia screamed and yelled, 'No, I will not! I will not be bound! I am Serpentia the great! You brought me here to rule, not to serve.' The queen's outburst only provoked laughter and ridicule across the hall. Just then, the king's coils lashed at Serpentia and pinned her to the floor. His coils wrapped around hers and pressed hard. Overpowered, Serpentia cried and pleaded for mercy. The red-skinned creatures stepped forward and spat at her.

Nullity looked on, powerless and desperate. She pleaded mercy on behalf of her queen, but nobody saw or heard her. Then, the king dragged Serpentia into the chamber beneath the throne room. The queen's hands were bound by the strongest iron, and so was her tail. She screamed and struggled in vain.

The king now spoke to Nullity. 'You will attend to her needs here in this chamber, until the eggs hatch. It might take years.' Nullity nodded and, as the king left, she offered solace to her

queen, who screamed as the eggs grew inside her serpent body. The pain became unbearable as she pushed out each egg…. the first, the second… the hundredth. Serpentia yelled at Nullity, ‘Leave me! Even a worm like you cannot see me like this! I hate and detest you!’ Yet, Nullity stuck by her queen and, when she calmed down, she wiped her sweat, bathed her, and combed her hair. Nullity then said, ‘You will rise again, my queen. I will see you enthroned and proud, just as you were. Even though I am nothing, I will see to it that you do.’

Serpentia pondered incredulously at the extent of Nullity’s devotion. It was her servant’s loyalty that saved her. One of the hundred eggs was translucent. Nullity could see nothing moving within it, yet as she looked at it, she felt dizzy, and fell asleep. She dreamt of a woman, a huge green serpent, and a mage. The woman said, ‘Serpentia was me, and if this egg hatches, she will remember life as a lowly woman. The memories will drive her to despair.’ The serpent said, ‘I live on in your queen’s lower body. If this egg hatches, Serpentia will be swallowed by her king.’ Then the mage spoke. ‘Serpentia is my magic. I died as I made her. Her sting turned me to stone, but I live within her because I am her creator. If this egg hatches, another queen will take Serpentia’s place, and her name will be forgotten.’ Nullity answered, ‘Why do you tell me all this?’ They replied, ‘Because if this egg hatches, we will no longer live within Serpentia. Save your queen. Kill the king. Destroy the egg.’

Nullity woke up with the egg in front of her. Serpentia was sleeping. The woman removed the egg to the edge of Serpentia’s nest and placed another instead of it. She would deny it the mother’s warmth. Then, as the queen woke up, Nullity spoke to her about the dream. She also confessed that she moved the translucent egg. Serpentia was furious, not at Nullity, but at her king. ‘Bring me the egg,’ she said. As the queen gazed upon the sphere she quipped, ‘You are less than a worm Nullity, but you are useful to your queen, and you will always grovel beneath her. That will be your privilege, my servant. Now, smash the sphere against the rock!’ As the sphere hit the ground, it cracked. It was hollow. Black smoke issued forth and sought Serpentia’s mouth, yet it dissipated into the air.

Thereupon, the chains binding the queen disappeared and Serpentia’s daughters cracked the shells. Nullity could see the glistening black and gold coils of the first daughter, then her black hair and smooth skin. One by one, they all hatched. They all looked like miniature versions of their mother, born as queens, ready to kill. Yet, for now, they only sought their mother’s and Nullity’s affection. Serpentia spoke, ‘Do not fear them, Nullity. Your pendant tells them that you are mine. Hold them and care for them, for I must leave the chamber.’

Nullity held the small serpent women close to her. She cuddled and hugged them as if she had birthed them herself. Then, Serpentia was back. Her fangs dripped blood, and her body was covered in her victims’ gore. The daughters laughed and hissed as they witnessed their mother’s glory. The queen smiled. Evil emanated from her gaze. ‘You were useful indeed, Nullity. The king died as soon as that accursed egg cracked. His creatures’ bodies are strewn all over the throne room. They are not dead, yet. My sweet little daughters will turn them to stone.’ As Serpentia said this, her daughters slithered out of the chamber to make their first kills.

Serpentia Regina

Serpentia rested on her skeletal throne, a posthumous gift of the serpent king. Mighty warriors, heroes of the past, kissed and caressed her; worshipped her. Nullity knelt at the foot of the dais, awaiting her queen's orders.

'Nullity, now that my daughters are wreaking havoc across the world, and that my men have pleasured me, I would talk to you, alone! Everyone else, leave!' Serpentia slithered towards Nullity. 'You will go to the upper world, through my cave, which now belongs to my eldest daughter. There, you will meet a scribe. Tell him my story. Reveal all the truth. I want everyone to know how I rose to become queen of the netherworld. I want to be worshipped for the great and beautiful woman that I am. They must know about my scheming, my lies, and the pleasure I take in cruelty. They must worship me even if they hate me. Go to him, now!'

Nullity then looked into my eyes and said, 'And so, I am here, scribe. This is the story my queen wanted me to tell you. Now I long to be back with her.' These were Nullity's last words to me. Just then, I heard a serpent's squelching scales and an evil laugh that sent shivers down my spine. Serpentia! The most beautiful woman I ever beheld! Yet, her lower body was that of a snake, and her rattle sang my death. Or so I thought. She spoke to me, 'Tell my story, scribe. If you do not, you will suffer torment. If you do, one day I shall seize you and turn you into a second Nullity.' As she said these words, I bowed as low as I could. Serpentia ordered me out of the cave and, as I looked back, I saw Nullity walking behind her back into the netherworld.

The daughter's silhouette was now visible in the distance. I rushed out of the cave fearing for my life.

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